



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/504,159	02/15/2000	Lalitha Vaidyanathan	11374-002001	7527

28863 7590 02/13/2003
SHUMAKER & SIEFFERT, P. A.
8425 SEASONS PARKWAY
SUITE 105
ST. PAUL, MN 55125

EXAMINER

VIG, NARESH

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3629

DATE MAILED: 02/13/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/504,159

Applicant(s)

VAIDYANATHAN ET AL.

Examiner

Naresh Vig

Art Unit

3629

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 January 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1 - 31 and 56 - 74 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1 - 31 and 56 - 74 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

This is in response to the Applicant's amendment received on 17 January 2003 to the Office Action mailed on 23 October 2002. There are 50 claims i.e. claims 1 – 31 and 56 – 74 are pending for examination.

Examiner has considered applicant's argument about the newly cited references and has withdrawn the finality of the office action.

Response to Arguments

In response to applicant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In this case, knowledge based systems have been in use at the time of invention to help in the decision making process. In addition, Neural Networks technology has been known at the time of invention. Examiner was introduced to Neural Networks technology where the presenter

had introduced how neural networks was used to make predictions. Neural Networks made the possible result based upon the data provided. Selection of a process based upon the possible result has been in use at the time of invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1 – 13, 15 – 19, 22 – 25, 27 – 29 and 56 – 74 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloo US Patent 5,895,450 in view of Cookmeyer II et al. US Patent 6,363,384 hereinafter known as Cookmeyer.

Regarding claims 1, 3, 56 and 64, Sloo discloses a computer program and a programmed apparatus for automatically handling and resolving user complaints against subjects. The program includes a routine for directing the apparatus to receive a complaint from a complainant against a subject, a routine for directing the apparatus to receive from the subject a response to the complaint, a routine to direct the apparatus to store the complaint and response in a data record, and a routine for negotiating a

settlement of the complaint (abstract). Sloo discloses its system is implemented with a programmed central computer, a plurality of access terminals, and a communications network coupling the central computer with the access terminals. The central computer is programmed to receive complaints and responses, store the complaints and responses in individual data records, and negotiate settlements to the complaints by several means described in the Detailed Description below. Once the disputes are resolved, the settlements or judgments are stored along with their respective complaints and responses in the data records (col. 1, line 63 – col. 2, line 6).

The apparatus receives complaints, notifies the subjects of the complaints, receives responses from the subjects, stores the complaints and associated responses in individual data records, and negotiates settlements by several means described below. The apparatus also provides public access to portions of the data records and monitors and rates the performance of the parties to the disputes to hold the parties accountable for their conduct during the attempted resolution of the disputes (col. 2, lines 53 – 65).

The program prompts the user to enter identifying information and creates a data record that is used to store the particular complaint, response, and other information relating to the complaint, prompts the user to enter his or her complaint and stores the complaint in the data record. (col. 4, lines 45 - 67). Sloo does not restrict its invention to be used for particular type of disputes (electronic commerce only). However, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skills in the art that the dispute can arise from breach of contract, mail fraud, defective products etc. For example, a

customer can purchase a product from a local store, mail order, or, from an online retailer like Amazon.com .

Sloo discloses that that its program then posts or stores a notice of the complaint in a publicly searchable database or record (col. 5, line 3 – 4). Sloo discloses to retrieve data records from previously resolved complaints and other information such as evidence acquired from interested third parties in step. The program may also access other information such as the general public sentiment regarding the dispute to establish an overall setting or environment for the dispute to aid in the artificial intelligence processing. The program then evaluates all of the gathered information to arrive at a judgment (produces result by comparing previously accumulated data). For example, the program may compare the characteristics from the current data record with the characteristics from the data records for the previously resolved complaints to arrive at an appropriate judgment. Over time, the apparatus and program will accumulate a large number of data records that can be used to accurately predict the proper judgment for almost any type of complaint or dispute (col. 9, line 64 – col . 10, line 34).

Sloo does not disclose using the results for selecting the mode to resolve the dispute. However, Sloo discloses to allow either party to appeal a decision that was rendered using either of the three previous settlement options (col. 7, line 39 – 41). Cookmeyer discloses system and method to identify problem under investigation. Series of HTML screen menu pages that appear at the host computer GUI and which a user may navigate to identify the problem under investigation. While the expert system

may be used proactively to help prevent major problems occurring, in the majority of cases it is used to investigate reported problems. In this diagnostic function the present system interviews the user through a series of questions to understand the problem. In this manner the system focuses the reported problem and narrows the scope of probable causes as much as possible. The answers to the questions are used to set up the next step of the analysis. In some problem instances, based on the user's answers, the system proposes prior actions that the user take before proceeding to the next step. In certain instances the system may infer and propose solutions to the stated problem, without having to go further (col. 19, line 66 – col. 29). Therefore, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art to analyze the outcome prior to selecting a method to minimize on time it takes to handle complaints and increase customer satisfaction.

Sloo discloses that the program transmits or allows the user to view the proposed solution (col. 11, lines 34 - 35).

Regarding claim 2, Sloo discloses to allow users to select program options. Sloo does not disclose to select how it should handle disputes. However, Sloo discloses that the program evaluates all of the gathered information to arrive at a judgment. Over time, the apparatus and program will accumulate a large number of data records that can be used to accurately predict the proper judgment for almost any type of complaint or dispute (col. 9, line 64 – col. 10, line 34). In addition, based upon business rules,

employees are authorized to handle the complaints directly or should they get the management (arbitrator) involved (for example, credit on disputed uncompleted phone call can be handled by the customer service representative, whereas, credit for large number of disputed uncompleted calls may require management involvement).

Therefore, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art to automatically handle the complains that can be handled as per the business rules, and, get the arbitrator involved when necessary to save costs in resolving customer disputes.

Regarding claim, 4 – 6, 57 – 59 and 65 – 67, Sloo discloses that that its program then posts or stores a notice of the complaint in a publicly searchable database or record. The notice preferably includes the key words or abbreviated description of the complaint entered by the user and is posted and stored in a publicly accessible and searchable complaint record such as a computer bulletin board. As described in more detail below, users other than the subject and complainant can access the central computer to conduct research (retrieve data) on the business conduct of subjects (col. 5, lines 3 – 11).

Sloo discloses to retrieve data records from previously resolved complaints and other information such as evidence acquired from interested third parties in step. The program may also access other information such as the general public sentiment regarding the dispute to establish an overall setting or environment for the dispute to aid in the artificial intelligence processing. The program then evaluates all of the gathered

information to arrive at a judgment (produces result by comparing previously accumulated data). For example, the program may compare the characteristics from the current data record with the characteristics from the data records for the previously resolved complaints to arrive at an appropriate judgment (col. 9, line 64 – col. 10, line 34). Sloo discloses that the program transmits or allows the user to view the proposed solution (col. 11, lines 34 - 35).

Sloo does not disclose summarizing the data. Cookmeyer discloses logging the event (with summarized and detailed information about the event and the Help file code) indicating a status level at which the rule observed event should be logged, such as "OK", "Inconclusive", "Major", "Minor" or "Observed" (col. 13, lines 45 – 49). Also, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art the summarization of data is a known practice to present the results (see sample of summarization of Results). Therefore it would have been obvious to a person with ordinary skill in the art to present summarized data to help the user understand the data and decide on what actions to take.

Regarding claim 7 - 10, Sloo discloses to allow the complainant to establish a settlement (possibly a monetary value or a contract condition) that the complainant would accept to settle the dispute. This settlement offer would be communicated to the subject of the complaint as described above so that the subject could accept or refuse the settlement offer (col. 7, line 66 – col. 8, line 4).

Sloo does not disclose to automatically handle the dispute. However, Sloo discloses that the program evaluates all of the gathered information to arrive at a judgment. Over time, the apparatus and program will accumulate a large number of data records that can be used to accurately predict the proper judgment for almost any type of complaint or dispute (col. 9, line 64 – col. 10, line 34). Sloo also discloses to give choice to the user to select the method for settling the dispute. In addition, based upon business rules, employees are authorized to handle the complaints directly or should they get the management (arbitrator) involved (for example, credit on disputed uncompleted phone call can be handled by the customer service representative, whereas, credit for large number of disputed uncompleted calls may require management involvement). Cookmeyer discloses to do some functions automatically. Cookmeyer discloses that when an analysis session is run the present expert system analyzes the data from the specified sources and reports network events that appear to be symptomatic of the problem described in the Background Interview. While the present system automatically sets the threshold values and infers the priority ranking of the sensed network events that will apply to the analysis session based on a default prioritization, it allows the user to change any one or all of these default threshold settings or event priorities (col. 22, lines 13 – 33). Therefore, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art to automatically handle the complaints that can be handled as per the business rules, and, get the arbitrator involved when necessary to save costs in resolving customer disputes.

Regarding claim 11, neither Sloo nor Cookmeyer disclose a transition from a mediation stage to arbitration stage. However, Sloo discloses to allow either party to appeal a decision that was rendered using either of the three previous settlement options (col. 7, line 39 – 41). Also, based upon business rules, employees are authorized to handle the complaints directly and in some cases they get the management (arbitrator) involved (for example, customer wants to return an item and the store has No Return policy. Customer Service Representative can only issue store credit for the item returned. Customer starts arguing and the dispute is not getting resolved, in this case, customer will call the manager on duty (arbitrator) to handle the dispute (transition the dispute to arbitration stage). Therefore, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art to transition the dispute to follow business guidelines for concluding the dispute by allowing the authorized person to handle the dispute.

Regarding claim 12 – 13, Sloo discloses that the subject could accept or refuse the settlement offer. Neither Sloo nor Cookmeyer disclose the judgement received is final judgement, and it is accepted by the parties involved in the dispute. However, It is known at the time of applicant's invention that the users of a service have to abide with the rules and regulations of the service provider. If the service provider has mandated that the judgement received will be the final judgement, then, both the user and the

subject have to agree to accept the requirements of the service provider before they begin to use the system (for example, in the TV show "Peoples Court")known to person with ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention), the judgement rendered during the show is is accepted as a final judgement (offer) by both the complainant and the plaintiff). The complainant or the plaintiff can be individuals or group of individuals.

Regarding claims 15 – 19 and 72 Sloo discloses to use a central computer, a plurality of access terminals, and a communications network coupling the central computer with the access terminals. The communications network is preferably a conventional telecommunications network including a plurality of switches connected to corresponding local exchange carriers. The network may also be a local area network, wide area network, wireless network, voice network, or any other type of network operable for coupling the access terminals to the central computer (col. 3, lines 31 – 38).

Neither Sloo nor Cookmeyer disclose the communication mode being selected by the dispute resolution specialist, However, it is known at the time of the invention to a person with ordinary skills in the art that the mode of communication is determined by the parties involved in a dispute (For example, the defendant may not have access to the internet). The resolution specialist may elect using postal mail, email, fax, telephone (conversation is recorded) etc. which is suitable to the all the parties involved. The private communications transmitted over the communications network may be

encrypted or otherwise protected using available technology (For example, in a credit card charge dispute, a customer can file a complaint with the credit card company by writing them, calling them etc. The credit card company has determined what communication means the customer can use to lodge a complaint).

Claim 72 is dependent on claim 15, and, claim 15 is dependant on claim 2. Claim 17, line 2 "determining a current mode of resolving the dispute" is responded to in the response for claim 2.

Regarding claims 22 – 25, Sloo discloses that after receiving the judgment related to the dispute, the program updates both the complainant's and the subject's performance records to reflect the judgment. The program then uses this new information to adjust the rating or score for the complainant and the subject. Specifically, the rating or score for the prevailing party is increased, while the rating or score for the losing party is decreased. Parties maintaining high scores or ratings may enjoy many benefits while using the apparatus. For example, these ratings or scores are used during the resolution of future complaints so that a party with a high score will more likely receive a favorable resolution to a future complaint while a party with a low score will more likely receive an unfavorable resolution (col.8, lines 50 - 58).

In addition, Sloo discloses that if the program determines that one of the parties in fact failed to comply with a term or condition of a judgment, it updates the appropriate data record to indicate the compliance failure and posts the information in the public

record to alert others to this failure and to discourage others from doing business with the party. This provides a valuable research tool for users wishing to research the conduct of a party and encourages the parties to a dispute to comply with the judgment rendered by the apparatus and program to avoid a negative public reputation. The compliance monitoring routine of the program also updates the appropriate party's performance record to indicate that the party failed to comply with the judgment and then recalculates the party's performance rating or score (col. 11, line 63 – col. 12, line 14).

Regarding claims 27, applicant discloses on page 9, lines 6 – 9 that “Additionally, the system provides a market-based system for assigning specialists. In more complex disputes such as business-to-business disputes, the specialists can choose their cases. This allows for the best match of specialization and interest and leads to the most effective resolution for the case.” Sloo discloses to select a judge or a jury from a list of pre-qualified persons who may have agreed to serve as judges or jurors. These pre-qualified persons are categorized by criteria that is helpful in selecting an appropriate judge or jury so that the program can compare the characteristics of the persons on the judge/jury list to the characteristics of the dispute to select a judge or jury that would be the most appropriate for the dispute. For example, judges and jurors who have technical skills may be identified and selected to resolve dispute involving technical matters (col. 8, lines 5 - 18).

Regarding claims 28, applicant discloses that "The dispute resolution system can be provided as an insurance covering transactions, where a seller in a transaction is a registered subscriber before a transaction is insured. (page 5, lines 20 – 22)". Neither Sloo nor Cookmeyer disclose to use the system as a means of insurance. However, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skills in the art that business do offer various forms of dispute resolutions means (warranty, money back guarantee etc.). Therefore, it is obvious to a person with ordinary skill in the art to offer some kind of customer assurance (means for resolving the dispute) to convince the customer that if they have some dispute with the product they are purchasing they can resolve in the disclosed means. For example, the dispute can against a cleaner damaging the appliance (customer can return the product (automatic), file a complain with the manufacturer (negotiate), file a law suit in the court (arbitration)) etc.

Regarding claim 29, Sloo discloses that the program begins where a user operating one of the access terminals accesses the central computer by way of the telecommunications network. The access may include conventional log-on (it is obvious that the user is registered in the system to log-on) or connection for data transfer procedures. The central computer then displays or transmits an initial message to the

Art Unit: 3629

access terminals describing the function and capabilities of the method (col. 2, lines 1 - 6).

Regarding claims 60 – 63 and 68 – 71, Sloo discloses to retrieve data records from previously resolved complaints and other information such as evidence acquired from interested third parties in step. The program may also access other information such as the general public sentiment regarding the dispute to establish an overall setting or environment for the dispute to aid in the artificial intelligence processing. The program then evaluates all of the gathered information to arrive at a judgment (produces result by comparing previously accumulated data). For example, the program may compare the characteristics from the current data record with the characteristics from the data records for the previously resolved complaints to arrive at an appropriate judgment. Over time, the apparatus and program will accumulate a large number of data records that can be used to accurately predict the proper judgment for almost any type of complaint or dispute (col. 9, line 64 – col . 10, line 34).

Sloo discloses that the program transmits or allows the user to view the proposed solution (col. 11, lines 34 - 35).

Regarding claim 73, Sloo discloses that the program posts or stores information in a publicly searchable database or record. Users other than the subject and

Art Unit: 3629

complainant can access the central computer to conduct research on the business conduct of subjects (col. 5, lines 3 – 11). The program retrieves the complaint data record and transmits it to the selected judge or jurors or allows them to view the data record (data is provided for resolution of dispute). The program also retrieves and allows the selected judge or jurors to review the performance records for both the complainant and the subject. (col. 8, lines 33 - 43).

Regarding claim 74, Sloo discloses that the central computer is also programmed to provide public access to the data records to permit viewing of the corresponding complaints, responses, and settlements for allowing other users to gauge the conduct of the subjects and to encourage the subjects to respond to the complaints in a timely and satisfactory manner (data collected on the subjects). Moreover, the central computer is programmed to monitor and rate the conduct and performance of both the complainants and the subjects during the course of the disputes. The ratings can be used to affect the outcome of the disputes and for other purposes to hold the parties accountable for their conduct during the attempted resolution of the disputes to encourage good conduct and cooperation between the parties during the course of the disputes.

Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloo US Patent 5,895,450 in view of Cookmeyer II et al. US Patent 6,363,384 hereinafter known as Cookmeyer in further view of Burchetta et al. US Patent 6,330,551.

Regarding claim 14, Applicant discloses on page 2, lines 7 – 11 that “the dispute resolution specialist also generates a final recommended resolution that, once accepted by the one or more parties, is recited in a binding contract between the one or more parties stating the willingness to abide by the recommended resolution” (contract is created after parties willingness to agree to terms (i.e accept the resolution rendered)). Sloo does not disclose creating a contract between one or more parties. However, Sloo disclose to have some type of agreement with the user for using the system. Sloo discloses that to minimize liability resulting from the use of the apparatus and to encourage users to file complaints without the fear of lawsuits, the program may require that the subject agree to a wavier of liability before proceeding (col. 6, lines 33 – 36).

Burchetta et al. diclsoses the user system participation agreement. The agreement preferably details the terms of use of the system and details regarding the process (businesses are known to dictate terms for using the sytems). Preferably, a button is provided on the menu for either agreement or disagreement with the contract. If the user agrees to the terms of the contract, he or she proceeds to the original menu choice (adding/editing cases, or viewing cases). Otherwise, the user is returned to the login screen with all information cleared. Therefore, it is known at the time of invention

to a person with ordinary skill in the art to modify Sloo as taught by Burchetta et al. and get both the user and the subject to agree to the terms and conditions to make the third party decisions legally accepted which could results in user and the subject saving money by avoiding high court costs.

(contract - The agreement of two or more persons, upon a sufficient consideration or cause, to do, or to abstain from doing, some act; an agreement in which a party undertakes to do, or not to do, a particular thing; a formal bargain; a compact; an interchange of legal rights. -Wharton, see "www.dictionary.com")

Claims 20, 21 and 26 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloo US Patent 5,895,450 in view of Cookmeyer II et al. US Patent 6,363,384 hereinafter known as Cookmeyer in further view of Main et al. US Patent 5,893,905 hereinafter known as Main.

Regarding claim 20, 21 and 26, Sloo does not disclose to use visual cues to draw user attention. However, Main discloses that "the user is presented with all the production computer platforms that are being monitored. This information is updated every 15 minutes to alert the end-user of any discovered problems with SLAs. Platforms in which a SLA is in jeopardy are shown in red. This is one method of an alert. Alternatively, an alert may take on several different forms, such as highlighting blinking,

etc." col. 9, lines 47 – 53). It is user's preference or service provider's preference on what information requires highlighting and how the information is highlighted. Therefore, it is known at the time of invention to a person with ordinary skill in the art to use visual cues to alert or draw users to look at the portion of the document that require user's attention (for example, Microsoft word document has the plurality of fonts, colors, style, bold, Italic, highlight etc.).

Claims 30 – 31 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloo US Patent 5,895,450 in view of Cookmeyer II et al. US Patent 6,363,384 hereinafter known as Cookmeyer in further view of Bell Atlantic Communications, Inc. hereinafter known as BellAtlantic.

Regarding claims 30 - 31, Sloo does not disclose showing a visual indicia to indicate membership, nor does it disclose using medallions. BellAtlantic discloses system and method where it uses visual indicia. Therefore, It is known at the time of the invention to a person with ordinary skills in the art that sellers display medallions showing their participation in several systems, groups, associations, etc. to promote their business. For example businesses display a "Better Business Bureau" (BBB) medallion at their point of sales.

Conclusion

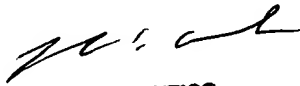
The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

1. "Technology, Computers and Conflict Resolution" discloses list of references available for dispute resolution
2. "Public Events", a list of public events disclosed by SmartSettle
3. "Alternative Dispute Resolution For Organizations: How To Design A System For Effective Conflict Resolution"

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Naresh Vig whose telephone number is 703.305.3372. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30 - 5:00 (Alt Friday off).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Weiss can be reached on 703.308.2702. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703.305.7687 for regular communications and 703.305.7687 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703.305.3900.


JOHN G. WEISS
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600

February 7, 2003